

## HOBBIES

IT'S a common theory, said Andra, that every man wi' ony spare time should hae a hobby o' some kind jist to keep him oot o' mischief, though oor Maggie declares that maist hobbies are a form o' mischief themsel's. She's maybe richt. There's nae great harm, certainly, in collectin' postage stamps, picture-postcairds, autographs, and sich like, but when it comes to makin' a collection o' umbrellas by liftin' the best ane oot o' the staun', it's rather a shady business. When fowk get the collectin' habit I'm aye suspesious o' them.

Ane o' the canniest hobbies that I ken o' is fishin'. It's a fine thing for developin' patience, hopefulnes, an' cauld feet; but it's a lang-established fact that fishers are the biggest lears on earth—or watter. Ye see, the imagination gets developed too when they're communicin' alane wi' nature, an' the mere suspesion o' a nibble has been kent to grow into a twenty-pun' saumon, successfully landed efter an oor's fecht, by the time the story has been tell't roon the circle o' their freen's. It wad be mair satisfactory if the fishers had a recognised scale. For instance, a nibble could staun' for a fair-sized saumon or hauf a dizzen trout; seein' ane loup wad be equivalent to landin' three trout; and catchin' the line on a tree-root wad at least be equal to ae wee ane. Of coorse,

that's merely for the purpose of reminiscence, an' has naething to do wi' the breakfast.

The main objection to golf as a hobby is that it produces awfu' swearers. When a man gets into sic a condection o' mind that he could hit onything within reach o' him, except the ba', the ordinary faceelities o' the English language are ower limited for the relievin' o' his feelin's. 'Talk about "addressin' the ba'," some o' the remarks addressed to it on these occasions are enough to gar it rin to the green itsel' an' hide in the hole for fair shame. It's my opeenion that golf should be confined to the deaf an' dumb. Ye could hardly imagine a man takin' the trouble to lay doon his clubs an' swear on his fingers.

Some hobbies, however, can be taen up at hame, sich as amateur gairdenin', which is a very interestin' occupation, if ye hae a man to dae the diggin' an' weedin', leavin' you wi' the responsibility o' watchin' the things grow, an' eatin' the grossets when they're ripe. It's no' sae nice, hooever, if ye've to gang oot on a damp nicht in your bauchles, wi' a lichter caun'le in ae haun' an' a pickle saut in the ither, to kipper the snails that are roosting on your prize coulifloo'ers. It's at a time like this that ye wish ye had been born a Frenchman or a juck. There's this to be said for the snail as an article of diet—there's nae banes in't, an' it's no hard to catch.

Some folk get their first attack o' horticultural fever when they move frae upstairs into a ground flat wi' a gairden plot in front that's jist big enough for the dog to scratch itsel' in without scrapin' the pent aff the railin's. The preevileges obtained for the extra two-pound-ten o' rent includes a fair-sized divot, commonly referred to as the "lawn," a raw o' smoky geraniums, a broken-herted wee rhododendron bus', twa or three tame worms, an' an occasional veesit from an optimistic bumbee. If a barber got the job, he could cut the lawn with a comb an' pair

o' scissors—singe it, and gie it a dry shampoo tae, for that maitter—in less than a quarter o' an 'oor; but the horticulturist maun hae a lawn mower to't, and when he comes hame frae business at night, he gets rigged oot in his shirt sleeves, Panama hat, an' cigar, an' shoves the mower up an' doon to the envy o' his upstairs neebors, wha are still confined to the window-box stage.

The hobby, hooever, that appeals to maist men—an' an odd wumman—is jiner-wark. You've aye something mair or less definite to show for your labours, though it should only be a blue thoom-nail an' some holes in the plaister o' the kitchen wa's.

There are some that never get beyond a soap-box or a prehistoric-lookin' wheel-barrow for Wee Wullie, but ithers, like ma neebor MacSorley, are mair ambeetious. Mac got the notion aff his ain boy what is attendin' ane o' thae High Schules whaur they learn manual work, an' a Professor o' Jinery comes roon' to show the laddies hoo to mak' ornamental bits o' firewud, an' what end o' a brace-an'-bit to hud to their stammicks when they're borin' a hole.

When Mac started he gaed in for it tooth an' nail—or, mair correctly speakin', hammer an' nail—an' I could hear him some nichts lang efter bedtime. Aince when I gaed roon' to see hoo he was gettin' on, he met me at the door wi' a shavin' a yaird lang stickin' to the heel o' his slipper, an' maist o' his fingers row'd up wi' cloots an' stickin' plaister. The scullery whaur he was workin' was knee-deep wi' shavin's, sawdust, an' bits o' wud, an' the smell o' the glue an' cheap varnish was strong enough to stop a hole in a door.

“Come awa' ben,” said he, “if ye can fin' a corner to sit doon in. What dae ye think o' that, noo?”

He had sawed an aipple barrel half-way through about the middle, removed the upper quarter, an'

put a sate in the bottom. Mrs MacSorley was busy feenishin' it aff wi' a fancy claith an' wee brass-headed nails. Mac ca'd it a cosy-chair at the time, but the things that he ca'd it afterwards werena fit for print, tho' they were maybe mair to the point.

"In the interests o' economy," said he, "no' to speak o' the artistic aspect, I wad recommend every man wi' ony gumption to mak' his ain furniture. Ye never ken what ye can mak' till ye try."

"Ye huardly ken even then," said I, hintin' at anither queer-lookin' object that seemed a sort o' compromise between a mailcart without wheels an' a Chinese kite.

"Oh, ye'll like that ane tae when it's feenished," said Mac confidently. "It's a readin'-chair wi' a patent adjustment o' my ain that enables ye to raise or lower it without gettin' up. We'll hae ye roon' to supper some night when I'm dune wi' them."

About a week later Maggie an' me were invited roon', an' there we met Mr Paiterson, Mac's father-in-law, an' a cousin o' his wife that was comin' oot for a doctor. Baith o' them, it seems, were fond o' jinir-wark themsel's, an' of course they were greatly interested in Mac's handiwork. Efter supper we sat doon at a wee fower-legged table o' Mac's ain design and manufacture for a game at catch-the-ten.

"She's a wee bit shoogly," said Mr Paiterson, giein' the table a shake.

"It's the flair that's to blame," said Mac. "It's no' very even."

"It's no' the flair ava," said Mr Paiterson, emphatically. "I see what's wrang. Ane o' the legs is about a quarter o' an inch langer than the ithers. Bring the wee saw, man, an' I'll pit it richt."

"Ye'll no' saw it here, faither," said Mrs MacSorley, "an' mak' a mess o' the carpet."

"Tuts, bring a newspaper then," said he, "an' I'll no' be a meenit wi't."

The newspaper an' the saw were brocht, an' turnin' the table ower, he cut a bit aff ane o' the legs in a twinklin', an' set it up again. But it was waur than before.

"H'm," said he, "that's funny!"

"Funnier than ever," said Mac, wi' a grin.

"I maun hae cut it aff the wrang ane," said Mr Paiterson. "Len' me a pencil." He got a pencil, marked twa o' the legs, cut about half an inch aff each, an' set up the table wi' a confident, "There na." But it wasna there yet.

"I'm thinkin'," said Mac, "ye'll sune hae her into a rockin'-horse, if ye keep on."

"It's maybe the flair efter a'," admitted Mr Paiterson, tryin' it a' ower the room without finding a spot whaur it could rest on its fower legs at ae time. "If I had a speerit-level. H'm, let me have anither try."

Within the next five meenits, he took about two inches aff a' the legs, an' the table was still limp'in' sairly.

"It's the want o' definite measurement," said the kissen. "Let me try noo."

He got a tape, measured the fower legs, an' made some calculations.

"To be mathematically exact," said he, "the average length o' the legs is twa feet five inches and eleven-sixteenths. In order to reduce them to the average it is necessary to take three-quarters o' an inch aff ane, an eichth aff anither, an' put fully three-sixteenths on the third. The fourth should dae wi' a rub o' sandpaper."

"Gran', man," said Mac. "Noo we'll see something nate. But for ony sake dinna reduce them muckle faurer than the average, or we'll hae to sit on the flair when we're usin' the table, or play at cairds wi' oor taes."

The kissen took aff his coat, an' set to work wi' a confident smile that didna wear aff till he set the table up on its legs again, an' discovered there was something wrang wi' the average.

"Man, she's fairly broken the teetotal this time," said Mac, wha seemed to enjoy the spoilin' o' his table.

"Eh! Ah! Um!" said the kissen, measurin' the legs again. "It seems I've put the wood on the wrang ane. But I'll sune set it richt."

Hooever in pu'in oot the nail he split the leg, an' efter tryin' to nail it thegither an' splittin' it waur than before, he had to saw about three inches aff, an' was still sawin' when Mac, laughin' uproariously, sat plump doon in his ain aipple-barrel cosy-chair an' knocked the bottom oot o't.

Mac is a stootish man an' no' very lang o' the leg, and the mair he wriggled the faurer doon he gaed in the barrel, till his knees were on a level wi' his chin, an' there he stuck. We tried to pu' him oot, but his claes had caught on something inside, an' he wadna come.

"Turn over the barrel an' pu' him oot at the bottom," suggested the kissen; so I held it while ane o' them pu'd his coat tails, an' the ither shoved in his heid an' his feet.

"Stop, ye deevils!" he yelled, "there's a nail in ma back."

We let go, an' he wriggled about till he was nearly black in the face.

"You that's a doctor," said Mr Paiterson to the kissen, "could ye no' bleed him or cut aff his legs till we get him oot, an' then put them on again?"

"Ye'll lat my legs alane," grunted Mac. "Ye made a big eneuch mess o' the table. Can ye no' bring the saw an' get me oot afore I'm chokit?"

It took the feck o' hauf an 'oor to set him free, for he had to put an airn hoop roon' the barrel to

strengthen it, an' the points o' some o' the nails were flattened doon inside. We had oor game on the kitchen table, and Mac sat on ae thick cushion wi' anither at his back.

A. LOCHHEAD.